[English]

Integrated Telephone Exchange System

290. SHRI MEHBOOB ZAHEDI :
SHRI HARADHAN ROY :
SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any representations recently from Members of Parliament about the need for covering Panagarh/Bud Bud to Barakat/Chittaranjan area under an Integrated Telephone Exchange System like other Metropolies;

(b) if so, the details thereof and action taken thereon;

(c) whether demand from entire industrial and coal-belt of Asansol-Durgapur area for the same system has also been received;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A joint representation dated 10.9.96 signed by a number of Hon'ble Members of Parliament has been received requesting that the exchanges located at Durgapur, Raniganj, Asansol, Chittaranjan, Industrial and coal belt areas of Bankura, Adra etc. are covered through an Intergrated Exchange system. This request has been examined.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

(e) As per the existing policy of the Department, an integrated exchange system also called group dialling system can be provided only within the same short distance charging area which roughly corresponds to a Tehsil. Since Durgapur, Raniganj, Asansol and Chittaranjan are located in different short distant charging areas, they cannot have an integrated system. However, a new technology OCB 283 exchange with a capacity of 11000 lines has been commissioned in March, 96 for connecting Durgapur SDCA exchanges. A similar large exchange of 14000 lines capacity has been planned for Asansol SDCA to cover exchanges at Barakar, Neamatpur, Chittaranjan, Raniganj and Burnpur.

Agro Channel on Doordarshan

291. SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether any proposal in under consideration of the Government to launch a separate AGRO channel on Doordarshan;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which it is likely to be launched?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

[Translation]

Cancellation of Train

292. SHRI BHIMRAO VISHNUJI BADADE : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the 321 up and 322 down Manmad-Daund-Mumbai Passenger Train viably running for last 50 years has since been cancelled without any reason;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government are aware of losses being suffered by the farmers living along this line due to cancellation of this train;

(d) if so, whether there is any proposal with the Government to re-introduce this train; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b). The run of 1321/1322 Bombay (Mumbai)-Pune-Daund-Manmad Passenger train has been curtailed only on Bombay (Mumbai)-Pune section w.e.f. 1.5.88 to generate line capacity for running of 1021/1022 Mumbai-Pune Indrayani Express.

(c) to (e). Some representations have been received about the restoration of this train.

There is no proposal to run this train to its original pattern. However, for the convenience of passengers of Daund-Manmad, a through coach is available between Daund and Mumbai via Ahmednagar-Manmad.

[English]

MOU with US

293. SHRI SARAT PATTANAYAK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Telecom Industry Services Association has signed a MOU with US body for telecom training; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) The Telecommunication Industry and Services Association of India has informed the Government that a Honorary and Friendly

Membership Agreement has been signed with Telecommunication Industry Association of USA to exchange an Honorary and Friendly Membership Certificate between two associations and to engage in variety of co-operative activities including exchanging visit, views, key publications, encouraging members of each association to participate in Telecommunication Exhibition or Seminar sponsored by other association.

The Government has no role to play in this matter.

Amendment in New Pension and ESI Schemes

294. SHRI S.B. THORAT : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any representations from the National Trade Union Organisations seeking amendment in the new pension and ESI schemes;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) the details of changes/amendments under consideration/finalised?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (c). The Government had received suggestions for making certain changes in the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995. The suggestions inter-alia relate to removal of discrimination between married sons and married daughters and between remarrying widows and remarrying widowers, extension of the scheme benefits to the employees drawing wages beyond Rs.5,000/- per month, provision for commutation, education in discounting rate for early payment of pension, provision of ensuring pension payment in default cases, application of the scheme to the subscribers who did not join the Family Pension Scheme, 1971, refund of Family pension-related withdrawal benefit in the case of exemption and coverage of piece-rated workers. These suggestions have since been examined and notification carrying out necessary amendments in the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995 has already been issued on 28.2.1996. Other suggestions like providing individual option, linking pension with the consumer's price index and giving pension as a third benefit have not been found actually feasible for acceptance.

2. The suggestions received about the ESI Scheme relate to increase in wage limit for coverage, enchancement in the per capita medical expense, provision of the Central Government's contribution towards the ESI Scheme, maintenance of Status-quo in respect of the workers' contributions etc. A draft notification providing interalia for enhancement in the wage ceiling from Rs.3,000/- to 6,500/- per month and for enhancement of the rate of contribution of the employer from 4% to 4.75% and for employee from 1.50% to 1.75% of the monthly wage has since been issued for inviting objections/Suggestions from all concerned.

Child Labour

295. SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY :
SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT :
SHRI K.D. SULTANPURI :

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether National Human Rights Commission has expressed dissatisfaction over the pace of implementation of programmes aimed at eliminating child labour/child labour in hazardous industries;

(b) if so, the effective initiatives taken by the Government in this regard during each of the last three years, State-wise;

(c) the achievements made and the funds provided utilised for the purpose during the above period, State-wise in general and Metro cities in particular; and

(d) the number of employers prosecuted under the Labour Act for employing children?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Government has taken a number of steps for the rehabilitation of child labour. As a part of the National Policy on Child Labour announced in 1987, project based action plan has been initiated in the areas of high concentration of child labour engaged in wage/quasi-wage employment. A major activity undertaken under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) is establishment of special schools to provide non-formal education, vocational training, supplementary, nutrition, stipends etc. to the children withdrawn from employment.

The number of NCLPs implemented during 1993-94 and 1994-95 was 9 and 12 with a coverage of 7000 and 14000 children respectively. A major programme was announced in August, 1994 to rehabilitate child labour working in hazardous occupations. As a follow up of the programme, Government is presently engaged in the task of rehabilitation of about 2 million children working in hazardous occupations by the year 2002. During 1995-96, 76 child labour projects were sanctioned for rehabilitation of around 1.5 lakh children working in hazardous occupations in 11 child labour endemic states. State-wise details regarding these 76 projects are given in the enclosed Statement. The total expenditure incurred on all the National Child Labour Projects taken together during the last 3 years is as under :

Year	Expenditure
1993-94	2.89 crores
1994-95	1.43 crores
1995-96	33.90 crores

(d) According to the available information, 415 employers were prosecuted during 1995-96 for violation